

## Aiken Standard: Chu touts nuclear power at SRS

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Both conservatives and environmentalists hailed the groundbreaking of a new Savannah River Site power station on Monday - one group for the way the power station does business, the other for the fuel the station uses.

Secretary of Energy Steven Chu was joined by South Carolina and Georgia Congressional delegation members to mark the start of work on a new renewable energy-fueled facility.

The new Biomass Cogeneration Facility replaces a deteriorating, inefficient 1950s coal powerhouse and oil-fired boilers at a savings of approximately \$35 million a year in energy, operation and maintenance costs. It also reduces air emissions, including 100,000 tons per year of greenhouse gas emissions, according to the Department of Energy.

It is not only the cost savings that pleased the conservatives present but also the fact that there is not upfront capital investment by DOE for the project, which is funded by a private, third party.

"By investing in energy efficiency, we are creating good jobs that can't be outsourced. This project will employ 800 workers during construction and about 25 people during permanent operations," said Chu. "The money from those paychecks will go straight back into the local economy and drive even more economic recovery."

Under DOE's Energy Savings Performance Contract (ESPC), the agency contracted with Ameresco Federal Solutions Inc. to finance, design, construct, operate, maintain and fuel the new biomass facility over the term of the 20-year contract valued at \$795 million.

Ameresco will be reimbursed from the guaranteed energy and operational cost savings generated by the project over the span of the contract. After the contract ends, all additional and continuing cost savings accrue to DOE, the company said in a release.

ESPCs are contracts in which private companies finance, install and maintain new energy- and water-efficient equipment

in federal facilities. The government pays no up-front cost, therefore saving taxpayer dollars, and the company's investment is repaid over time by the agency from the cost savings generated by the new equipment. This allows the government to use the private sector to purchase more energy-efficient systems and improve the energy performance of their facilities at no extra cost to the agency or taxpayers.

"Today, it's not about biomass; it's about a new way of doing business," said Rep. Gresham Barrett.

"If you think it's about replacing a coal plant, you are missing the point," said Sen. Lindsey Graham.

Ameresco will construct the facility, install two steam boilers and be reimbursed from actual cost savings generated during the 15-year debt service payback period. The energy savings will result from replacement of the inefficient D Area Powerhouse with a high-tech biomass facility, fuel switching - coal to biomass - and improved operational efficiencies with new equipment better matched to SRS' load requirements.

Ameresco CEO George Sakellaris praised two politically polar individuals for pushing the new way of doing business and the new technology being in South Carolina.

"Reps. (Joe) Wilson and (Jim) Clyburn have been passionate advocates for the project from the beginning," he said. "Passionate for green jobs and for benefits for the federal government."

Eight hundred jobs will be created in the construction process with 25 permanent jobs running the facility, plus another 100 job in forestry and logging supplying the plant with the biomass.

Majority Whip Jim Clyburn loudly and repeatedly praised the stimulus package and the benefits he sees it is reaping at SRS. With the stimulus's head objector, South Carolina Gov. Mark Sanford, feet away, Clyburn hammered home his point, as well as his commitment to jobs in the "green economy."

After Clyburn, Graham purposefully thanked the governor for coming before praising Clyburn's input and influence and extolling the benefits of the differing opinions of the South Carolina delegation.

Chu's remarks focused on the future of the energy supply and called the United States to become a world leader in this technology after discussions with the Chinese premier.

"He said, 'We see this as an incredible opportunity,'" Chu said of the conversation. "I thought, 'Heck, anything they can do, we can do better.' It is ours to lose. The economic opportunity for this state and for our country is enormous."

Both Chu and Sakellaris praised the new presidential administration for catalyzing this effort and, specifically, this project.

"All projects under the previous administration stalled," Sakellaris said. "Under Secretary Chu, these have moved ahead. If not for the secretary, we would not be here today."

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